

Your Guide to a Stress-Free Benefits Renewal

A month-to-month checklist to keep you on track



Why you should strategically manage your benefits renewal

As an HR leader, you understand the importance your benefits package plays in attracting and retaining great talent. You also recognize that employee benefits is one of your company's highest employee-related expenses. For these reasons and others, the benefits renewal process deserves care and attention as well as reliable and ongoing support from your broker. That's why we created this checklist—to provide a better way to manage your employee benefits renewal.

Getting started...and start early

We recommend starting your renewal process a full six months before your renewal date so you can tackle a few tasks each month without becoming overwhelmed by your renewal deadline. This gives you ample time to:

- Take control of the renewal process, instead of letting it control you
- Evaluate current benefits, goals & funding models
- Survey employees to report their wants & needs
- Discuss possible changes with key players
- Develop a strategic plan for moving forward with renewal
- Transition to new technology, such as online open enrollment

Don't have six months? That's OK - you can handle some items together to fit your timeline.

Take a different approach to renewal

Your benefits renewal presents an opportunity. You can improve cost-effectiveness, expand benefits offerings, boost employee satisfaction, manage risks, or improve technology; in fact, you can achieve all of those objectives. By taking some time to reconsider your renewal process, we hope you'll be able to view renewal as a strategic opportunity, rather than an annual chore.



6 months before your renewal deadline

Evaluate your current plan

Take inventory of the plan you're currently offering to your employees. Note the cost of the plan, both to your company and your employees.

Research new ways of delivering benefits

Review your options for carriers and coverage, quality of benefits, and high-level costs. Research emerging technologies to see if there is a better way to manage benefits and enrollment. Now is a good time to consider moving from paper-based to online open enrollment and to evaluate HR solutions that include a benefits administration, payroll and HR functionality.

Set organizational goals

How do you separate your company and culture from your competitors? How does your benefits package fit into your company goals? Are you growing or shrinking? What costs can be controlled? What do you need to do to attract (and retain) great talent?

Discuss funding options

More than 80% of employees don't know the full cost of their benefits. They know how much they pay, but they likely don't know what your company pays on their behalf. To show the value of the benefits you offer, it's advantageous to make your funding transparent. To do this:

- **Review current funding policy:** Find out what you're doing now and how it's working, especially with respect to always-rising healthcare costs.
- **Review alternative funding options:** After you've checked your current funding policy, consider if a different model is better for your business and employees.
 - Traditional Funding, typically high-premium with low co-pays and deductibles
 - Defined Contribution, in which you will decide a set amount (contribution) to pay per employee; employees then choose how to "spend" that amount
 - Salary Banding, in which employee contribution varies based on salary/wage

Review budgets

After reviewing current and alternative funding models, decide which is best for your employees and which fits best into your budget.



5 months before renewal deadline

Find benchmarks

While it is important to evaluate your internal benefits and funding, it is also important to benchmark what companies in your industry and of similar size are offering in terms of benefits. These are the companies you will compete against for talent. This is also a good time to evaluate current trends in employee administration (i.e., recruiting, self-service, payroll, performance) and considering adopting those that fit your company and culture.

Survey your employees

Instead of relying on anecdotal opinions of your current benefits offerings, conduct a survey to quantify and analyze how employees are using benefits. This objective analysis will help you see where you stand today. Conducting a survey will let you produce real data that can be passed on to management to aid in the decision-making process.

Quick Tip: Benchmarking

Leveraging employee benefit benchmarks built on a data sample that is too shallow or not demographically relevant can be a costly mistake. When choosing benchmark data, you need to be able to trust the source of the data, the depth of the sample and that the data has been validated, ideally by a third-party, not the organization conducting the survey. Not sure how to get started or what to ask? Request a consultation and we'll help you get started.

4 months before renewal deadline

Evaluate current and potential providers

You've captured a lot of data - internally and externally. Now you want to use that information to build a long-term human capital management strategy that encompasses benefits, employee management and development, compliance and more. To successfully execute that strategy requires assistance from third-party experts such as a benefits broker, technology vendor, compliance/legal resources and others. Now is the time to evaluate your current providers to ensure they are best-suited to help you accomplish your goals.

3 months (90 days) before renewal deadline

Most companies don't begin the benefits renewal process until 90 days before their renewal date. By this point, your advanced planning should greatly assist your decision making and you can:

- Choose your final mix of products
- Plan the transition if changing carriers, plans, or technology
- Finalize your funding option

2 months before renewal deadline

Communicate with employees

Start planning and communicating with employees about benefits offerings, specifically any new additions or major changes.

Deploy new technology

To help ensure a smooth transition, deploy new technology well in advance of open enrollment to allow for sufficient testing and change management.

Confirm carrier interfaces are established

Be sure that information will be transmitted in a satisfactory way between your company and the carriers' systems. Ideally, the benefits administration platform you use should provide direct carrier connections to reduce your administrative burden.



It's Time For Open Enrollment

Support employees and their questions

Be sure to provide employees the assistance they need, helping them to weigh their options and select the appropriate benefits. This can be an especially stressful time for HR departments, but there are a few ways to make it easier:

- Your broker should assist with open enrollment meetings and provide a contact center to help answer employee questions
- Offering employees the ability to complete enrollment online can streamline the entire process and provide them with access to the tools and materials they need - at their convenience - to select the best plan to meet their needs and those of their family

Open Enrollment is Over

After enrollment, there are a few more action items to ensure your efforts have been successful and your employees are satisfied.

- **Survey employees again**
Find out what they think of any changes you have made and compare the results to your previous survey. If you've implemented new technology, be sure to ask about the user experience and any issues they encountered.
- **Scrutinize any new plans**
Ensure everything is working as anticipated. Take time to review all benefits-related operations, from payroll deductions to carrier billings and remittances.
- **Pat Yourself On The Back**
Once employees are enrolled and your system is evaluated, go ahead and celebrate a job well done... with this checklist, you're already well-positioned for next year!



**OPEN
ENROLLMENT
AHEAD**



Benefits | HR Technology | Services



Our world evolves at a furious pace, particularly in the areas of technology and insurance. Partnering with a provider that understands and keeps up with ongoing changes in both markets can save your company time, money and stress. PeopleStrategy provides a single source for today's employers to build an effective and competitive human capital management program through a strategic combination of technology, employee benefits and services.

Hire-to-retire technology suite

PeopleStrategy provides an enterprise-level, end-to-end HR solution that lets HR manage administrative tasks faster, easier and more accurately while empowering employees and managers with the tools they need and expect in today's workplace. From recruiting and onboarding to payroll, benefits administration and performance, we offer a better employee experience through a single platform.

High-touch broker services

PeopleStrategy offers clients a team of employee benefits experts who will work closely with you to optimize your employee benefit program's financial performance while improving employee satisfaction. To achieve sustainable employee benefit savings across multiple plan years, you'll enjoy robust strategic planning, plan-remarketing, compliance support, and employee communications.

Administrative services

While technology has changed the HR world (and there is more to come), HR is still about people. PeopleStrategy allows you to focus more time on your people by providing comprehensive benefits administration services that include administrative support and advocacy services to employees.

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attract, manage & retain great people.**

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